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# 215,000 letters opened by CIA

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Washington—Three former Central Intelligence Agency officials said yesterday that they had recommended ending an illegal mail-opening program, but it continued until one of the officials told his superior in early 1973: "This thing is illegal as hell . . . and we ought to knock it off right now in the light of the Watergate climate."

The CIA opened more than 215,000 letters from 1953 to 1973, according to statistics made public at a hearing of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities.

Howard Osborn, former director of security for the CIA, told the committee that he made a Watergate-based appeal for an end to the program after the chief postal inspector had been pressing him along these lines for four years. Shortly thereafter, James R. Schlesinger, CIA director from February to July, 1973, made the decision to end the program.

Gordon Stewart, a former CIA inspector general, testified that in 1969 he had made a similar recommendation to Richard Helms, CIA director at the time.

Several committee members were clearly interested in why this recommendation was not followed. Mr. Helms, who was in the audience at yesterday's hearing, is scheduled to testify today, along with two former postal inspectors and three former postmasters general.

Meanwhile, the House Select Committee on Intelligence voted to postpone for two weeks any action on Henry A. Kissinger's refusal to supply a memorandum the committee had subpoenaed concerning the 1974 Cyprus crisis.

The committee voted, 8 to 5, to accept an offer from the secretary of state to appear personally to explain his decision and to offer information himself on questions concerning his alleged mismanagement of that crisis.

Representative Otis G. Pike (D., N.Y.), the committee chairman, said he and four other Democrats wanted to "proceed against Dr. Kissinger just as we would against ordinary mortals."

But Representative Robert McClory (R., Ill.), the ranking minority member, argued in favor of hearing Mr. Kissinger's testimony before taking action.

All four Republicans, plus four Democrats, supported postponement. The committee is attempting to have Mr. Kissinger testify October 30 or 31 after he returns from his current trip to China.

At yesterday's Senate committee hearing the chairman, Senator Frank Church (D., Idaho), read into the record CIA statistics showing that in the center about 215,820 letters were opened and their contents read during the 20 years that the program was in operation.

Another 2.7 million letters were subject to a so-called "mail cover," in which the names of the sender and receiver were photographed, Mr. Church said.

This operation is legal, since no statute prohibits it. The opening of first-class mail is specifically prohibited by a criminal statute.

Mr. Osborn, who said his office ran the mail-opening program after it had been conceived by the CIA's Office of Counter Intelligence, told the committee that he had been "misled" by Mr. Helms as to the true nature of part of the program.

This concerned a supposed "mail-cover" operation in San Francisco that actually involved mail openings as well.

Mr. Stewart, the former inspector general, was asked why he failed to inform the CIA's general counsel about the mail-opening program, since he knew it to be illegal.

"I can only say that at the time I don't feel it was necessary," he said.

## CIA probes linked to aide's execution

Boston (AP)—An official of an unspecified Middle Eastern country was executed for supplying information to the Central Intelligence Agency after the official's identity was determined through testimony in congressional probes of the CIA, the Boston Globe said yesterday.

The newspaper quoted a congressional source as saying the execution took place recently.

The Globe said its report was based on at least a score of interviews with intelligence sources inside and outside the CIA.